

**REMARKS**

This is in response to the Official Action currently outstanding with regard to the above-identified application, which Official Action the Examiner has designated as being FINAL.

The present application was originally filed with Claims 1-28. As a result of Applicants' earlier response to a Restriction requirement issued by the Examiner, Claims 9-11 and 18-28 have been withdrawn from further consideration in this prosecution. In the foregoing proposed Amendment, Applicants have amended Claims 1, 12 and 16. Claims 4 and 14 have been canceled. No claims have been added or withdrawn. Consequently, in the event that the Examiner grants entry to the foregoing Amendment, Claims 1-3, 5-8, 12-13 and 15-17 will constitute the claims under active prosecution in this application.

At the outset, Applicants thank the Examiner for the courtesy accorded to their undersigned representation during a telephone interview regarding this application on 23 August 2005. This application was discussed generally during that interview. Further, alternative wording for the claims of this application then under consideration by the Applicants was discussed with the Examiner with a view toward furthering the prosecution of this application in an expeditious manner. However, no agreement was reached between the Examiner and Applicants' undersigned representative as a result of the interview.

As this application presently stands:

1. Applicants' claim for foreign priority under 35 USC §119 (a)-(d) or (f) has been acknowledged, and the receipt by the United States Patent and Trademark Office of the required certified copies of the priority documents for this application has been confirmed;
2. The drawings filed with the application on 1 September 2000 have been indicated to be acceptable;

3. Claims 1-3, 5-8, 12-13 and 15-17 have been finally rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over Fukushima (US Patent No. 6,115,561); and
4. Claims 4, and 14 have been noted by the Examiner as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but indicated to be allowable if appropriately rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of their respective base claims and any intervening claims.

Further comment regarding items 1-2 above is not deemed to be required in these Remarks.

With respect to items 3 and 4, Applicants herein propose that Claims 4 and 14 be canceled, without prejudice, and that the common limitations thereof be added to independent Claims 1, 12 and 16.

These proposed amendments to Claims 1 and 12 effectively constitute the rewriting of Claims 4 and 14 in independent form as the Examiner has suggested in the currently outstanding Official Action would result in Claims 1 and 12 (and the claims that respectively depend therefrom) being in condition for allowance as required by 37 CFR 1.116.

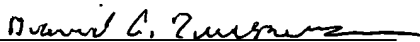
The foregoing Amendment also proposes that the initial words of Claim 16 be corrected from "The forming..." to -- An image forming...--, and further that the common limitations of Claims 4 and 14 be added to Claim 16 as well. Applicants respectfully submit that since the Examiner has already indicated that the subject matter of Claims 4 and 14 is allowable, the amendment of Claim 16 in a manner similar to the above-proposed amendments of Claims 1 and 12 results in an allowable claim as well. Further, since Claim 17 depends from Claim 16, the result of the foregoing Amendment, if entered, is respectfully submitted to be that all of the claims of this application would be allowable for at least the reasons stated by the Examiner in the currently outstanding Official Action.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner grant entry to the foregoing Amendment After Final Rejection Under 37 CFR 1.116 as placing this application in condition for allowance without the necessity of further consideration and/or search on her part as required under 37 CFR 1.116. Furthermore, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration, and a decision allowing this application as so amended, in response to this communication.

Applicants also believe that additional fees beyond those submitted herewith are not required in connection with the consideration of this response to the currently outstanding Official Action. However, if for any reason a fee is required, a fee paid is inadequate or credit is owed for any excess fee paid, you are hereby authorized and requested to charge and/or credit Deposit Account No. 04-1105, as necessary, for the correct payment of all fees which may be due in connection with the filing and consideration of this communication.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: August 31, 2005

  
**SIGNATURE OF PRACTITIONER**

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